

The Effects of Total Physical Response-Story Telling to Teach Vocabulary to Improve Elementary Students' Vocabulary Achievement

Luh Arumdiah Rosita Dewi

Abstract. *Having sufficient vocabulary is very important in order to be able to listen, speak, read and write. However, many teachers still neglect it. As a result, many students get difficulty in improving their language skills because of the limited number of vocabulary items they have acquired. Because of that, it is important to enrich students' vocabulary achievement by implementing an effective technique to teach vocabulary. This study was conducted to find out the effectiveness of Total Physical Response-Story Telling to teach vocabulary to improve Elementary students' vocabulary achievement. It was a quasi-experimental study. The writer used two groups, pretest-posttest design. The experimental group was taught by using Total Physical Response-Story Telling (TPR-S) while the control group was taught by using translation. The research instrument in this study was the vocabulary test that consisted of 50 multiple-choice items that the students had to finish in 90 minutes. Then, she set the level of significance which was 0.05. Finally, she analyzed the data by using Mann Whitney U Test. From the results of the research, it showed that TPR-S gave significant influence to improve students' vocabulary development. The students who were taught by using TPR-S obtained higher vocabulary achievement than those who were taught by using translation. Therefore, the research suggested to the teachers of "MIMI" Elementary School use TPR-S as their teaching technique to teach vocabulary in their classroom. It also suggested the students not only to review the new vocabulary they have learned but also to apply it in their daily life so that they will not forget it easily.*

Key Terms: *TPR-S, translation, vocabulary achievement*

Introduction

Since English has become an international language, more and more people learn English. In Indonesia, for example, English is taught even before the children enter the playgroup. This is supported by the fact that many children learn a foreign language when they are still in a very young age. This phenomenon has made Teaching English to Young Learners, TEYL, become increasing famous. Since English is important nowadays, in every school, English is taught as one of the main subjects. In schools, teachers do not only teach the language skills but also the English components such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. However, many teachers still give less attention on the students' vocabulary achievement. They are still using the traditional technique in

teaching vocabulary. Consequently, many students have got difficulties to improve their language skills because they lack of vocabulary. Therefore, the need of giving more attention to the vocabulary development of the students by using different techniques to teach vocabulary is getting higher and higher.

Vocabulary is still the Cinderella of language teaching. Although vocabulary is as one of the most important aspects of language developments, it is still the neglected area. Carter and Mc. Carthy (1988) state that vocabulary is the heart of language teaching and learning. People will not be able to listen, speak, read and write if they do not have sufficient vocabulary. However, the focus of attention is almost exclusively on grammar and pronunciation. Many course books have given 'structures', yet they have given little guidance other than word lists (Taylor, 1992). Furthermore, many teachers do not give much attention to their students' vocabulary mastery because teaching vocabulary has been included in teaching reading. Teachers tend to give attention more to teach the students' reading skill than to teach their vocabulary. Besides that, since they do not have time to teach vocabulary by using various techniques, many of them prefer to use an old way of teaching vocabulary which is by translating and then memorizing the words. Consequently, many students have got difficulties in improving their language skills because they lack of vocabulary.

Besides the limited number of vocabulary items that the students acquire, the traditional technique of teaching vocabulary such as translation also affects students' interest in learning English. In this technique, teachers introduce new vocabulary by translating the vocabulary items of the target language to the students' native language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Then, the students are asked to memorize the words. This technique is helpful in comprehending texts in the target language because students know the meaning of the words. However, the vocabulary the students have learned will only stay in their short term memory because they only read and translate the new word without having a chance to experience it (Stevick, 1982). As a result, they will forget the words easily. In other words, students who are given opportunities to make associations with new words and to form types of mental images such as acting them out are more effective than only memorization. Therefore, implementing a technique which gives students more opportunities to experience the target language is important.

One of the teaching techniques which let students make association with the target language they learn is Total Physical Response-Story Telling (TPR-S). TPR-S is one of major types of TPR activities besides Total Physical Response Body (TPR-B), Total Physical Response Object (TPR-O), and Total Physical Response Picture (TPR-P). However, from the four major types of TPR activities, TPR-S is the most interesting and enjoyable. In this technique, first of all, new vocabulary items are introduced by using Total Physical Response (TPR). Then, a

story featuring the words is read by the teacher while his students are acting the words out. New vocabulary can be introduced and easily comprehended within a story's context because learners usually learn new skills when they are interested in the topic or when it is useful to them. Moreover, storytelling is also a way to emphasize the uniqueness of each person's imagination, and imagination can generate language. Furthermore, because teachers will contextualize the acquired vocabulary and act it out, their students will be able to hear, see, act out, retell, revise and rewrite it (Marsh, 2000). Since it will also give students something to think in the target language and the students will also have more opportunities to experience the acquired vocabulary, it will stay longer in their memory (Stevick, 1982). He also states that experience is the food that the brain needs. In other words, the more chances the students get to experience learning the target language the faster they will learn the language. In addition, because TPR-S provides more relaxed situation and fun, students will be able to acquire the vocabulary more successfully. Jensen (1998) puts it even more forcefully: "Emotions drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways". In other words, creating a warm emotional climate in which children feel self-confident, free, and highly motivated is equally as important as providing activities that have emotional connections.

Thus, based on the discussion above, the writer conducted a study on the effectiveness of Total Physical Response-Story Telling to teach vocabulary to improve students' vocabulary achievement.

In this research, the writer wanted to know the effectiveness of teaching vocabulary by using Total Physical Response-Story Telling (TPR-S) technique. She wanted to find out whether the students who were taught by using TPR-S obtained higher vocabulary's scores than those taught using translation or not.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was learning theory as proposed by Asher (in Richards & Rodgers, 1986). This theory points out that children learn new vocabulary by listening first before they learn to speak, and children will be able to recall the vocabulary items easily if they are combined with physical activities. Moreover, this theory also says that emotions have a great effect on learning. This theory is supported by Krashen (1981), Long (1983), Caine and Caine's (1997), Jensen (1998), Foss (1994), Smith (1994) in Curtain & Dahlberg (2004). The theories above were discussed more deeply in Chapter II.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study was conducted to find out the effectiveness of TPR-S to teach vocabulary to Elementary students. To achieve her purpose, the writer conducted an experimental study.

As it is quite difficult and almost impossible to do a true experimental study, a quasi-experimental study is preferable (Cohen et.al., 2000:214). A quasi-experimental study is used when it may not be possible for the experimenter to assign subjects randomly to group. In a school situation, schedules cannot be disrupted or classes reorganized in order to accommodate the experimenter's study. In this case, the experimenter must use designs that will provide as much control as possible under the existing situation. Thus, due to the limited of the number of classes, the design of this study was a quasi-experimental study. The writer used groups as they were already into classes.

Moreover, according to Cohen (2000), this design is actually an elaboration of the one group pretest-posttest design. Therefore, there were two groups in this research. The first group was as the experimental group, and the other group was as the control group. Both groups did the pretest and posttest, and then the results were analyzed to find out the differences which might occur because of the different treatments which were given to both groups.

Group	Pre-Test	Independent Variable
	Post-Test	
E	Y1	X
Y2		
C	Y1	-
Y2		

In this research, the experimental study was taught by using Total Physical Response-Story Telling, while the control group was taught by using translation. Both groups were given the same teaching hours and materials.

However, due to the limited time, the writer only taught them for a month (12 sessions). The treatment was given in the first four weeks of the first semester (August-September). It was done in order to avoid the influence of any other materials and teaching techniques given to the students. Moreover, based on the school curriculum, English is given for six hours a week (an hour is the same as thirty five minutes). Thus, there were twenty one teaching hours a month given to the experimental and control group before a post-test was conducted. In addition, to maximize the results, the teacher had the students review the story and the vocabulary items they had learned on the previous meeting before they got a new story and vocabulary items. Finally, to make students have productive vocabulary, the teacher had the students create sentences based

on the vocabulary they had learned. The more sentences they made the more productive they required the vocabulary.

Populations and Sample

The samples of this study were the grade four students of “MIMI” Elementary School. There were fifty students as her subjects since in one class there were only twenty five students. As the school has determined the members of each class, the writer used purposive sampling (Cohen, et.al, 2000: 214). She did not randomize the sample, but she used the classes as they were. Both classes were taught by the same English teacher so that it could maintain the uniform of the teaching technique during the experiment.

Research Instrument

The instrument of this study was the vocabulary test that consisted of 50 multiple-choices items that the students had to finish in 90 minutes. The length of time was determined after the writer conducted a pilot test. Thus, the pilot test was administered to make sure that the test had validity and reliability, and to analyze the items as well as to determine the length of the test time.

Findings

The score of the experimental and the control group were calculated by using Mann Whitney U non-parametric test. The number of the testees was fifty students. Each group consisted of twenty five students. The experimental group was taught by using TPR-S while the control group was taught by using translation. From the table 4.1, it can be seen that the highest score achieved by the students of both groups was 92 and the lowest score was 20. The mean of the scores of both groups was 67.42 and the St. Deviation was 15.288. In addition, from the calculation the writer found that the z value was 2.344. Since the z value = $2.344 > 1.96$, then the writer concluded that the observed differences between the groups has reached statistical significance. It meant that H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. In other words, there were significant differences between the students who were taught vocabulary by using TPR-S as vocabulary teaching technique to those who were taught vocabulary by means of translation.

Below is the table of the calculation of the experimental and the control groups' scores which was calculated by using SPSS.

Table 1
The Calculation of the Experimental and the Control Group's Scores
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
SCORE	50	67.42	15.288	20	92
GROUP	50	1.50	.505	1	2

Ranks

	GROUP	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
SCORE	Experimental Group	25	30.32	758.00
	Control Group	25	20.68	517.00
	Total	50		

Test Statistics

	SCORE
Mann-Whitney U	192.000
Wilcoxon W	517.000
Z	-2.344
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.019

Discussion

This part discussed the implementation of Total Physical Response- Story Telling (TPR-S) and translation as vocabulary teaching technique during the experiment that was related to the theory of TPR-S and translation.

(a) The Implementation of TPR-S in Teaching Vocabulary

TPR-S has proven to be profoundly successful with students because it can make students acquire vocabulary more actively. It can be seen from the students' behavior on the implementation of TPR-S during the treatment. Although the students had never used the technique before, the students who belonged to the experimental group felt very happy. It happened because the new vocabulary items were introduced by using actions, gestures and movements, so that it was more enjoyable. Besides that, they were also very active and enthusiastic because they did not need to memorize the words.

There were some steps that students had to follow in learning vocabulary by using TPR-S. First of all, the teacher introduced the new vocabulary items by using physical movement and gestures. This first step was able to attract the students' attention because they would have to guess too the meaning of the new words through the gestures and

movements that were modeled by the teacher. Secondly, the teacher asked the students to do the actions. This step encouraged the students to be active. Thus, the students looked more excited. Third, the teacher tested the students' comprehension by observing the speed of the students' responses. She said the words while the students were acting them out. In this step, the students looked more enthusiastic because the teacher did it quite fast, so that it was more challenging for them. Next, the teacher told the story while the students were acting the words out. When the students did this step, they looked happy because they felt that they were the main characters. After that, the teacher asked them to do the same step with their partner. In this step, the students were given chances to learn how to pronounce the words. Finally, to test their comprehension, she had them close their eyes and acted the words while she was telling the story. This step was the most interesting because it was the most challenging activity. When they were closing their eyes, they were using their imagination while doing the correct actions. The best thing that TPR-S could do was that students did not realize that they had acquired new vocabulary when they did the action. Finally, the teacher tested the students by asking them to make up their own sentences by using the new words. The result was outstanding. Although they still made many grammatical mistakes, they were able to create sentences by using the new words in a good context.

Moreover, not only the students, the teacher also enjoyed teaching by using TPR-S. TPR-S made the class become more interesting and fun. She could laugh together with the students when the students made mistakes in the actions. She felt relaxed, so that the objective of the teaching could be achieved well. Besides that, she could also be closer with her students. She felt that TPR-S improved the relationship with her students.

From the discussion above, the writer could say that teaching vocabulary by using TPR-S was really effective. It supported McKay's study (James, 2000), which also found out that TPR-S was effective enough to teach vocabulary. This might happen because in TPR-S the students learn the new vocabulary by using physical activities. TPR-S is the development of TPR which was popularized by Asher. As quoted by Richards & Rodgers (1986), Asher holds that the child language learner acquires language through motor movement – a right-hemisphere activity. Right-hemisphere activities must occur before the left hemisphere can process language for production. When a sufficient amount of a right-hemisphere learning has taken place, the left hemisphere will be triggered to produce language and to initiate other, more abstract language processes. It is also supported by Hawkins (1999) who states that the acquisition of knowledge was enhanced when accompanied by physical activity. Richards & Rodgers (1986) also add that the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled more easily if it is accompanied by motor activities. Krashen (1981) with his input hypothesis also points out that simply the use of the target language is not

enough, it should be used in such a way that the message is understood by the students, and this can be accomplished through the use of gestures, examples, illustrations, experiences, and caretaker speech (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004). Thus, since TPR-S provides meaningful tasks, it helps students retain the information in their long-term memory.

Besides that, TPR-S is also effective to teach vocabulary because it provides relaxed situation. Asher points out that an important condition for successful language learning is the absence of stress. The key to stress-free learning is to tap into natural bio-program for language development and thus to recapture the relaxed and pleasurable experiences that accompany first language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Caine and Caine's (1997) (in Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004) also states that emotions are critical to the brain's patterning. If an event is related to positive emotions, there is more of a chance for successful patterning to take place. Jensen (1998) puts it even more forcefully: "Emotions drive attention, create meaning, and have their own memory pathways." Creating a warm emotional climate in which children feel self-confident, free, and highly motivated is equally as important as providing activities that have emotional connections. Moreover, Stephen Krashen (1981), in his discussion of the "affective filter," highlights the importance of emotions in the language learning process and the fact that children are known to resist learning when learning is unpleasant, painful, or being attempted in a punitive environment. The filter goes up in the presence of anxiety or low self-confidence, or in the absence of motivation. The filter goes down, and the language input can come through, when motivation is high, when a student is self-confident, and when the learning takes place in a relatively anxiety-free environment. In addition, Nancy Foss (1994) also points out that when students are asked to learn in a way that makes them uncomfortable, they experience stress. Thus, since TPR-S eliminated the need of memorization, it lowers the level of stress. Because of that, it enhances fluency, invites participation and increases motivation of the students.

Finally, in TPR-S, the students were also asked to work with their partners, therefore, it also encouraged the students to be more active in learning the new vocabulary. Smith (1994) (in Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004) puts it, "Language is not a genetic gift. It is a social gift." Meaning can be constructed much more readily if social interaction is an important part of the learning. The social relationship of partner and small group activities add to the richness of meaning-based experiences for the brain. Therefore, it can be seen that emotions have a great effect on all learning.

(b) The Implementation of translation in teaching vocabulary

Although the results of this study showed that TPR-S was more effective to teach vocabulary to the students, translation with a story was also a good technique to teach students. Translating a target language to the native language might be boring. However, if it is done within a story context and done enthusiastically, it might be interesting too.

There were some steps that students had to follow in learning vocabulary by using translation. First of all, the teacher introduced the new vocabulary items by writing them down on the board. Secondly, she asked the students to read the story by themselves, so that they knew the use of the unknown words in the context. Since the story was interesting and not too long, they felt excited to read it. Then, she had the students guess the new words by themselves in their native language. In this part, the teacher gave them freedom to guess the words so that they felt free to express their ideas. Next, she wrote down all of the students' answers on the board. After she gave the correct translation of the words, she asked her students to translate the story in their native language. After the students understood the content of the story, the writer asked them to memorize the words. When she did it, the students felt frustrated. They felt burdened and unhappy to do it. Finally, in order to know the students' understanding of the words they have learned, she asked them to make up their own sentences by using the new words. Although the words taught to the students were not many (between eight to nine words), some of them still could not make the sentence appropriately. Some of the sentences they made did not fit with the meaning of words. The first two weeks they made few mistakes in making the sentences. Then, they made more and more mistakes in the rest of the weeks. It might happen because they felt bored and burdened every time they were asked to memorize the new words.

Moreover, not only the students, the teacher also felt unhappy to see her students felt frustrated when memorizing the new words. Although she had tried to motivate them, they did not respond it well.

From the discussion above, the writer could say that teaching vocabulary by using translation can be effective if it is done within story context and develop the memorization part into more exciting activities. It is because by using story, students can learn new vocabulary directly from the context. It is also more interesting because children like stories. Moreover, by reading a lot, students will gradually enrich their vocabulary. It is also supported by Egan (1986, 1997) who identifies the story form as one of the most effective tools for communicating new information to young learners, and Bruner (1990) who makes the even stronger claim that our perception of the world is shaped by stories to which we are exposed and which we have internalized (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004).

Besides using stories, teachers should also try to create other activities which do not burden the students too much. Memorization can be quite burdening for the students. However, if it is combined with other activities such as vocabulary games, it can be fun too so that the students will not think that it is a burden.

Summary and Conclusion

As stated in chapter 1, vocabulary was the heart of language teaching and learning (Carter & Mc. Carthy, 1991). It was one of the important aspects in language development. In order to be able to listen, speak, read and write, people need to have sufficient vocabulary. Unfortunately, the real English teaching and learning practice at school does not pay much attention to this. Many of them think that vocabulary does not need to be taught exclusively because it has been included in the reading section. In addition to this, teachers at school also generally do not use various techniques to teach vocabulary. Some of them still use translation and memorization as the teaching technique so that many students get difficulties to improve their language skill because of their limited vocabulary.

Looking at this condition, the writer did a research on teaching vocabulary. In her research, she wanted to know the effectiveness of Total Physical Response-Story Telling (TPR-S) to teach vocabulary to the Elementary students. In this study, she took the students of grade four of "MIMI" Elementary School as her samples. She conducted a quasi-experimental study. There were two groups in this research, experimental and control group. She taught by using TPR-S to the experimental group and translation to the control group. After analyzing the pre-test and post-test, the writer found out that there were differences between the students who were taught by using TPR-S and those who were taught by using translation. The results showed that the students who were taught by using TPR-S obtained higher vocabulary achievement than those who were taught by using translation. Thus, from the findings the writer could say that teaching vocabulary by using Total Physical Response-Story Telling is effective enough to improve the students' vocabulary achievement. It is because TPR-S provides more relaxed situation and fun. It uses stories and body movements so that it is more interesting. Therefore, it invites more participation from the students. Besides that, since it eliminates the need for memorization, it increases their motivation so that without realizing it they have acquired the vocabulary.

Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, the writer would like to give suggestions which will give advantageous contributions to the English teachers and students as well as other researchers.

(a) To English teachers

The findings of this study showed that students who were taught by using TPR-S obtained higher vocabulary achievement than those who were taught by using translation. Therefore, the writer is very eager to suggest that English teacher should use TPR-S to teach vocabulary to their students. It is because by using this technique, they will give their students more opportunities to experience the target language by

themselves. Moreover, this technique also improves the relationship between the teacher and the students. They will feel closer since this technique lets both teacher and students participate actively. In addition, the writer also expects that teachers will be more creative in teaching vocabulary to their students. They can also develop TPR-S into more interesting and fun activities or combine it with the other teaching technique so that their students will be able to enrich their vocabulary more easily.

(b) To Other researchers

Realizing that there were some weaknesses in this study due to some limitations that included the time to conduct the study, the population and the sample to use in this study, and the materials that were taught during the treatments, the result of this study was not perfect. Thus, the writer really expects that there will be similar study conducted in a longer period and with wider population and bigger samples in order to obtain more generalizable results. Finally, the other researchers who want to do a similar study can also do deeper research by investigating the receptive and productive vocabulary that can be achieved by the students after being taught by using TPR-S.

References

- Benson & Ilson. 1997. (Revised Edition). *The BBI Dictionary of English Combinations*. Amstredam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins
- Brown, J.D. 1996. *Testing in Language Programs*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brown, C & Hatch, E. 1995. *Vocabulary, Semantics, and Language Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Carter, R and Carty Mc, C. 1991. *Vocabulary and Language Teaching*. New York: Longman.
- Curtain, H and Dahlberg C. 2004. *Languages and Children-Making the Match*. New York: Pearson
- Cohen L, Lawrence M and Morrison K. 2000. *Research Methods in Education*. London and New York: Routledge Fulmer.
- Fountain, K. 1980. *Guidelines for Vocabulary Teaching*. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Center.
- Gairns, R & Redman, S. 1998. *Working with Words*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerngross, G& Puchta, P. 1992. *Pictures in Action*. New York: Prentice Hall International.
- Griffee, D. 1992. *Songs in Action*. New York: Prentice Hall International.

- Hatch, .E & Lazaraton, A. 1996. *The Research Manual. Design and Statistics for Applied Linguistics*. Boston: Heinline & Heinline Publishers.
- Hawkins, T. 1999. The Mental Note of the Month. Available at: <http://www.mentalnotemusic.com/tprs.htm>. Retrieved on 22 March 2006.
- Hughes, A. 2004. *Testing for Language Teacher*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. International Dictionary of English. 1995. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- James, A. 2000. *Learning Another Language through Actions*. New York: Sky Oaks Production.
- Jensen. 1998. Teaching with the Brain in Mind. Available at: <http://www.usd267.com/schools/colwich/Charter%20Application.htm>. Retrieved on 24 April 2006.
- Larsen-Freeman, D. 2000. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Pres. Longman Advanced Dictionary. 2000. Essex: Pearson Educated Limited.
- Lyons, J. 1977. *Semantics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Marsh, V. 2000. Total Physical Response Story Telling: A Communicative Approach to Language Learning. Available at: http://192.107.108.56/portfolios/s/stringham_1/thesis/38story.htm. Retrieved on 22 March 2006.
- McCall, R. 1998. *Fundamental Statistic for Behavioral Sciences*. Seventh Edition. California: Brooks/Cole publishing Company.
- Nation. P. 1990. *Teaching and Learning Vocabulary*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle. Oxford Learner's Pocket Dictionary. 1987. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pramesti, G. 2006. *Panduan Lengkap SPSS 13.0 (dalam Mengolah Data Statistik)*. Jakarta: PT Alex Media Komputindo
- Richard, J & Rodgers, T. 1986. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stevick, E. 1982. *Teaching and Learning Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor, L. 1992. *Vocabulary in Action*. New York:Prentice Hall.
- Total Physical Response Story Telling*. 2005. available at: <http://www.tprstorytelling.com/story.htm>. Retrieved on 22 March 2006.